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ABSTRACT

An analysis of perfect verb forms in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) looks at the distribution of forms by semantic function and co-occurrence patterns in Samana English and ex-slave recordings. Results suggest that despite the overall rarity of this category in the general realm of past time, the most frequent forms used to mark it ("have" + past participle and bare past participles) are not at all marginal in contexts "licensed" for the present perfect in standard English. Co-occurrence patterns with temporal distance, adverbs, and conjunctions also mirror those of the present perfect in standard English, while differing from those proposed for creoles. This suggests that the form "have" actually functions as a productive marker of perfect in these data. Bare past participles, with the exception of "seen" and "done," are probably the result of "have" deletion since their occurrence is highly restricted to the same perfect context. It is argued that the origins of these perfect forms and their functions must be traced to the original source in Britain, not to the influence of creoles. (MSE)

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HAS IT EVER BEEN 'PERFECT'? UNCOVERING THE GRAMMAR OF EARLY BLACK ENGLISH*

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1. Introduction

Genetic relationships between varieties are often assessed by cross-linguistic comparisons of the tense/aspect system. This is especially true of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), whose verbal delimitation paradigm has been the subject of intense study for decades. This is in part due to the ongoing and still contentious debate on whether its present system developed from a prior creole or directly from the vernacular British varieties spoken by early white plantation staff. The sheer complexity and abundance of grammatical apparatus concentrated in this area of the grammar make it an excellent site for examining the differences and similarities amongst related varieties.

Over the last few decades the frequently used domains of the verbal system have been extensively exploited. In the area of copula usage and past tense expression, the underlying systems of AAVE and other varieties of English were found to be similar, though AAVE tends to extend English rules through the application of additional phonological

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and grammatical processes.[1] In other areas of the verb system, such as present time reference, the patterning of surface forms, although atypical of contemporary varieties of standard English, has been shown to constitute reflexes of linguistic change whose patterns of variability reflect the state of the English vernaculars to which the slaves were exposed (Poplack and Tagliamonte 1989, 1991),[2] while simultaneously differing from the behaviour proposed for creoles (e.g. Tagliamonte et al. 1996). But these findings have not been univocal. Some researchers such as Winford (1991), DeBose (1994), and DeBose and Faraclas (1994) claim that contemporary AAVE preserves traces of a creole grammar. Thus, despite decades of research, the origins of AAVE remain controversial.

One area of the tense/aspect system which presents a test in point for this issue is what I will refer to here as the PERFECT. In standard English the PERFECT is typically equated with the morphosyntactic construction *have* + past participle, as in (1).[3]

(1) AUXILIARY *HAVE* + PAST PARTICIPLE:
   a. Some of them ***have regretted*** it already. Yes, many of 'em ***have regret*** it already. (SE/006/171-173)[4]
   b. It *been* so long I***'ve forgotten.*** (SE/020/87)
   c. I ***have been told*** that if they know you handling money, they raise your wages. (SE/010/1005-7)
   d. That was the first they learnt me and I'm old and it ***have remained*** here. (SE/002/115-6)

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1 See Baugh 1980; Fasold 1971, 1972; Labov 1969, 1972a; Labov et al. 1968; Pfaff 1971; Poplack and Sankoff 1987; Tagliamonte and Poplack 1988; Wolfram 1969, 1974.

2 See also Poplack & Tagliamonte 1994 for the plural.

3 In these data the main verb of the *have* + past participle construction can surface as a weak verb without inflection or as a strong verb with preterit morphology, in addition to the standard English past participle form, as illustrated in the second verb phrase in (1a).

4 Codes in parentheses identify the speaker and line number in one of two corpora, Samaná English (SE) or the Ex-slave Recordings (ESR). For details of the corpora see below.

In AAVE the infrequency of verbal constructions with *have* coupled with the plethora of other forms used for comparable, though not entirely similar functions, e.g. auxiliary *be*, as in (2), preverbal *done*, as in (3), bare past participles, as in (4) and *ain't* + verb, as in (5), have been used as evidence of an underlying creole system.

(2) AUXILIARY *BE* + VERB:
- a. I'***m pass*** a lot of trouble. (SE/002/374)
- b. Now they have so many houses. They all ***is made*** it one thing. (SE/003/480-2)
- c. I'***m forgot*** all them things. (SE/015/257)
- d. Well, with me nothing ***is happen***, nothing strange. (SE/006/144)
- e. Let me see, I'***m*** near ***forgot*** what I was to holler. (ESR/001/43)

(3) PRE-VERBAL *DONE*:
- a. Plenty ***done gone*** and they'***s*** lose their life. (SE/005/476)
- b. I ***done been*** to Miami, Hollywood ... (SE/010/1032)
- c. So much trouble ***done pass***. (SE/002/113-4)
- d. Grandpa was always saying them old oxens ***done run*** off in-***runned*** off in the river with us. (ESR/00Y/62)

(4) BARE PAST PARTICIPLE *DONE/BEEN/SEEN/GONE*:
- a. I never ***seen*** him. (SE/001/919)
- b. They ***been fixing*** the road. (SE/015/221)
- c. She ***gone*** to San Martin. (SE/005/114)
- d. Because what I had to do, I ***done*** it when I could. (SE/011/1144)

(5) *AIN'T* + VERB:
- a. He ***ain't wrote*** yet ... He ***ain't write*** yet. (SE/019/236-7)
- b. She ***ain't married*** none yet. (SE/005/160)
- c. I ***ain't got*** nothing to do. (SE/011/1143)
- d. I ***ain't*** never ***wore*** none. (ESR/00X/270)

This study considers the PERFECT in two corpora which represent an earlier stage of AAVE — Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings. The Samaná English corpus comprises 21 interviews with native English-speaking descendants of American ex-slaves, who settled the remote peninsula of Samaná in the Dominican Republic in 1824 (Poplack and Sankoff 1987). The variety spoken by these informants is considered to derive from a variety of English spoken by African Americans in the early nineteenth century.[5] The Ex-Slave Recordings are a series of audio-recorded interviews with 11 former slaves born in the southern United States between 1844 and 1861 (Bailey et al. 1991). These corpora bear crucially and uniquely on the controversial origins and development issues in the current study of AAVE since they provide the necessary time-depth for assessing linguistic change (ca. 1800's) and the advantages of data drawn from naturally-occurring speech.

In PERFECT contexts, both Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings exhibit the same forms attested in contemporary studies of AAVE, listed in (1)-(5) above. They also contain 'three verb clusters' with auxiliary *be* and *have*, as in (6), English preterite morphology, as in (8), and solitary verb stems, as in (7).

(6) THREE VERB CLUSTER WITH AUXILIARY *HAVE*:
   a. He told me that he ***had done pass*** through them English books. (SE/006/315-6)
   b. He ***had done been*** to Saint Thomas and place. (SE/001/647)

(7) THREE VERB CLUSTER WITH AUXILIARY *BE*:
   a. They ***ain't paid*** us yet and I***'m done spent*** plenty money with the documents. (SE/006/155-6)
   b. I***'m done been*** over there plenty but I don't like it. (SE/005/312-3)

[5] For detailed background and justification for this contention, see Poplack and Sankoff 1987; Poplack and Tagliamonte 1989; Tagliamonte 1991; Tagliamonte and Poplack 1988.

(8) PRETERITE MORPHOLOGY (SUPPLETION AND INFLECTION):
   a. They all ***died*** out already. (SE/013/80)
   b. But I don't know what ***took*** her now. (SE/015/245)

(9) UNMARKED VERBS:
   a. I'***m got*** eighty - going on eighty five. I never ***put*** my foot to [an] obeah. I don't believe in that. (SE/002/1072-3)
   b. I never ***like*** the city. (SE/013/113)

In this article I perform a distributional analysis of the forms used for the PERFECT in these materials. The term PERFECT is employed to refer to the semantic functions which prescriptive English grammar has labelled 'present perfect' tense. The morphosyntactic constructions that occur within these contexts are referred to as surface 'forms'. I approach these data from two different perspectives. In the first I take the semantic functions of the English PERFECT as the starting point and examine the frequency and distribution of forms that occur there. In the second, I begin with the individual forms and investigate their co-occurrence patterns with a number of independent features of the linguistic environment.

In order to assess the grammatical function and/or functions of these forms, I draw comparisons with standard and vernacular varieties of English and English-based creoles while at the same time casting the analysis into the larger context of linguistic change. My results suggest that despite the multitude of different forms, their distribution in Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings patterns in the same way as the English perfect. Co-occurrence patterns of the most frequent forms in past time reference contexts more generally provide additional support for this contention. Further, parallels not just in form, but also in function with earlier stages of the English language suggest that the non-standard variants can be interpreted as synchronic remnants. These findings corroborate the accumulating evidence from earlier independent analyses of Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings.[6]

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6 Poplack and Sankoff 1987; Poplack and Tagliamonte 1989; 1991; 1994; Tagliamonte 1991; Tagliamonte and Poplack 1988; 1993.

2. Previous Analyses of the PERFECT in AAVE, Creoles and English

2.1. AAVE

The standard English PERFECT has generally been considered absent from the underlying system of contemporary AAVE (Fasold and Wolfram 1975: 65; Labov et al. 1968: 254; Loflin 1970; but cf. Rickford 1975 for an alternative perspective). Three types of evidence have been adduced in favour of this contention. First, the morphosyntactic construction *have* + past participle is said to be extremely rare. Second, verbs other than *have* appear in auxiliary position, as in (10).

(10) a. I ***was*** been in Detroit.
b. I ***didn't drink*** wine in a long time. (Labov et al. 1968: 254)

Third, past participles, e.g. *been, done,* sometimes occur without a preceding auxiliary, as in (11), and where they cannot be accounted for by deletion of an underlying *have*.

(11) a. He ***been know*** your name.
b. He ***been own*** one of those.

This means they cannot be interpreted as an English past participle in a present or past perfect construction (Labov 1972b: 53).

The explanation for these linguistic facts involves not only a rejection of the PERFECT as a category of AAVE grammar, but also a denial that the standard English distinction between the preterite and past participle exists. A single surface form with no auxiliary appears across the board whether it surfaces with the morphology of an English past participle, as in example (12a), preterite, as in (12b), or there is alternation between forms, as in (12c).

(12) a. He ***taken*** it.
b. He ***came*** vs.
c. He ***done*** it. vs. He ***did*** it.

Wolfram and Fasold (1974: 66) suggest that instead of a separate past participle in AAVE, there is a 'general past form' that encompasses a number of separate categorical distinctions in English, particularly the simple past and PERFECT.

But what underlying grammar produced these forms? Many researchers have suggested they derive from a creole system. Dillard (1972a) divides pre-verbal *done* into two separate categories, one with an auxiliary preceding, e.g. *He's done come*, and one with no auxiliary, e.g. *He Ø done come*, attributing this difference to the distinct sources of the respective forms — AUX + *done* being an English form and Ø + *done* a creole form. Fickett (1972) suggests that *been* and *done* represent specific time periods in the past, i.e. *done* for recent past, and *been* for remote past time. Although this particular function for *done* is not widely attested, the remote time interpretation for *been* is quite widespread (e.g. Dillard 1972a; 1972b; Stewart 1965; Wolfram and Fasold 1974).[7]

2.2. Creoles

In creoles, pre-verbal *done* and *been* are widely-cited as typical tense/aspect features. While *done* is considered a perfective or completive marker (e.g. Alleyne 1980), *been* is considered a past and/or anterior marker, often with a remote interpretation (e.g. Agheyisi 1971; Faraclas 1987). The English *have* + past participle does not appear at all, pointing to a polar distinction between English and creole grammars (Bickerton 1975: 128). Unfortunately, the literature on this subject is entirely qualitative making form/function inferences about these forms difficult to assess. The only empirical investigation, Winford's analysis of the PERFECT in Trinidadian Creole, corroborates Bickerton's claim with its dramatic split between *have* usage with middle class speakers and verb stem forms with working class speakers (Winford 1993).

[7] Rickford 1975 specifies that the remote time interpretation is only applicable to the stressed version of *been* in AAVE.

2.3. English

But what exactly is the nature of the *English* PERFECT system? Much of the research claiming that AAVE has a creole-like grammatical system has based its conclusions on comparisons of AAVE features with standard (prescriptive) contemporary English usage rather than with vernacular varieties of English to which Africans must have had closer historical connections (Montgomery and Bailey 1986: 13), or with related present-day white vernaculars (Butters 1989: 194; Rickford 1990; Vaughn-Cooke 1987: 68) to which it might be more appropriately compared. Research on present-day varieties of vernacular American (Christian et al. 1988; Feagin 1979) and British English (Ihalainen 1976) as well as other regional varieties, e.g. Tristan da Cunha (Scur 1974) and Newfoundland, Canada (Noseworthy 1972)) have confirmed that many morphosyntactic forms used in PERFECT contexts in AAVE also appear in a wide geographic range of English dialects, many of which are entirely beyond the realm of creole influence. Thus, for example, there is no independent validation of Winford's (1993) claims that the patterns of surface forms used for PERFECT functions in Trinidadian Creole differ from an English one.

In what follows I describe the inventory of surface forms that have been attested in the literature on different varieties of English and review the hypotheses (where they exist) which have been put forward to explain them. We will see that the surface *forms* found in contexts of PERFECT reference are virtually the same across descriptions of AAVE, creoles and other varieties of English.

2.3.1. Have Deletion

The most frequently-cited non-standard form in PERFECT contexts is an English past participle which surfaces with no preceding auxiliary, as in (13) and in example (4) above.

(13) a. He ***been*** there. (SE/001/189)
b. Don't do that. I never ***done*** it. (ESR/008/25)

This form is attested in the United States (e.g. Atwood 1953; Christian et al. 1988; Fries 1940; Krapp 1925; Marckwardt 1958; Mencken 1971; Menner 1926; Vanneck 1955), Canada (Orkin 1971), Australia (Turner

1966), England (Wakelin 1977), Ireland (Visser 1970) and Tristan da Cunha (Scur 1974). The most popular explanation for this form is the *have*-deletion hypothesis which assumes that the forms with, and without, *have* fulfil the same function and thus can be attributed to the removal of an underlying *have* (e.g. Barber 1964; Wright 1905). But this does not explain its appearance in contexts in which the distinction between preterite and past participle appears to be neutralized (e.g. Menner 1926).

2.3.2. Generalized Past Marker

Thus, a second hypothesis for the bare past participles is that they represent the development of a new semantic category. They were originally based on the PERFECT but contexts in which the auxiliary syncopated, i.e. *I('ve) seen, I('ve) done*, led to complete elision. This auxiliary-less form was then adopted in vernacular varieties, reanalyzed as a preterite and extended to all the functions of the past tense (Menner 1926: 238; Vanneck 1955), so that *I seen him* has come to have exactly the same meaning as *I saw him*. (Mencken 1971: 520). This explanation for the bare past participle parallels the 'general past form' posited for AAVE (Wolfram and Fasold 1974: 66).

2.3.3. Loss of the PERFECT Tense

Some researchers have suggested this is the first stage in a process which will lead to the eventual loss of the PERFECT category in the grammar. This conclusion is said not to be surprising in light of the fact that the position of the PERFECT in the history of many languages is rather unstable, having been lost and reintroduced at various times (Scur 1974: 22; Vanneck 1955). For example, in French the gradual relaxation of the degree of recentness or current relevance required for use of the PERFECT enabled its form to supplant the simple PAST while losing its original meaning.[8]

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[8] French, High German and Russian have all lost the distinction between preterit and perfect and the same phenomenon is characteristic of some other Germanic languages, Swedish and some Slavic languages as well (Scur & Svavolya 1975).

2.3.4. Lexical Restriction

Given these descriptions of *have* deletion one would think that bare past participles are frequent and productive forms. In fact, a bare past participle is a rare item in English since the only contexts where one can be unambiguously identified are with strong verbs. Weak verbs, which have no distinction between preterite and past participle morphology, would appear as preterites in the event of *have* deletion, making them indistinguishable from the (simple) past tense. Even within this limited range of contexts however, bare past participles rarely occur. An empirical study of variant forms of the PERFECT in the English of Tristan da Cunha, a small island in the South Atlantic, (Scur 1974) revealed only five — the verbs *see*, *be*, and *do* and sometimes *come* and *get*, as in (14) below.

(14) a. I ***been*** to South Africa.
b. We never ***seen*** a tractor around.
c. They ***done*** away with it.
d. We ***got*** plenty of them.
e. They just ***come***.

The same lexical restriction appears to be true of different varieties of English in England. Cheshire (1982) reports that working class teenagers in Reading used *done* categorically in the preterite, as in (15), while Hughes and Trudgill (1979) report variable occurrence of *seen*, (16a), and *done*, (16b), as preterites.

(15) She ***done*** it, didn't she, Tracy? (Cheshire 1982)

(16) a. You never ***seen*** them, you know. (Hughes and Trudgill 1979: 68)
b. I ***done*** another couple of years there, then they closed up. (Hughes and Trudgill 1979: 79)

2.3.5. *Been* and *Done*

Two frequently-cited bare past participle forms, *been* and *done*, require special mention because they appear in contexts which are not always directly translatable into standard English via *have* deletion (see Section

2.1). Despite this fact, these forms are attested in *vernacular* (white) English in a wide range of geographic locations in the United States and Canada (Feagin 1979; Noseworthy 1972; Williams 1975). *Done* has been referred to as an adverb (Feagin 1979) or a quasi-modal (Christian et al. 1988) and is generally considered 'completive/emphatic'. *Been* is generally attributed with meanings equivalent to the standard English PERFECT although in Newfoundland, e.g. (17a-b), Noseworthy suggests that it has a connotation of remoteness, indicating that the state of affairs took place 'farther back in the past than any action denoted by ... *have* + past participle' (1972: 21-2). Note the similarity to attested creole patterns (see Section 2.2). In Alabama, as in (18a-c), the meaning corresponds to 'begun in the past long ago and continued up to the present', or simply 'once, long ago', as in (18a-b).

(17) a. I ain't ***been done*** it.
b. I ***been cut*** more wood than you. (Noseworthy 1972: 22)

(18) a. I ***been knowin'*** your grandaddy for forty years.
b. Well, I chewed tobacco some, and then I started smokin' — started smokin' cigarettes. Course I — I ***been quit*** about 15 years since I smoked. (Feagin 1979: 255-6)

2.3.6. Three Verb Clusters

Although relatively obscure, three verb clusters, of the form AUX + *done* + verb, are also attested in vernacular (white) English in the United States (McDavid and McDavid 1960). Christian et al. (1988: 43) describe an uninflected form, i.e. *done*, which occurs before an inflected verb optionally preceded by an inflected auxiliary in Ozark and Appalachian English, as in (19a-d). The same structure surfaces in Alabama English, as in (19e) (Feagin 1979).

Ozark English:

(19) a. I think they ***done took*** it.
b. Them old half gentle ones has all done ***disappeared.*** (Christian et al. 1988: 33)

Appalachian English:

c. She asked us if we turned in the assignment; we said we done turned it in.

d. ... because the one that was in there ***had done rotted.*** (Christian et al. 1988: 33)

Annistan, Alabama English:

e. You buy you a little milk and bread and you'***ve done spent*** your five dollars! (Feagin 1979: 122)

2.3.7. Auxiliary *Be* vs. *Have*

Use of *be* as an auxiliary in PERFECT contexts instead of *have* is attested in contemporary varieties in England, Scotland, Ireland (Curme 1977; Edwards and Weltens 1985) and in the southern United States (Feagin 1979), as in (20).

(20) a. Some of the unions ***is done gone*** too far.

b. It was so quiet I thought everybody ***was done gone*** to bed. (Feagin 1979: 127)

2.3.8. Present Perfect vs. Simple Past Tense

Clearly, there is robust variability amongst PERFECT forms in vernacular English. In addition, although the meaning of past and perfect tenses in English is distinguished in many cases, researchers widely acknowledge that, even in the standard language, as in (21), (Quirk et al. 1985: 191; Wright 1905: 298) there are many contexts in which either one may be used (Frank 1972: 81; Leech 1971: 43).

(21) a. Now, where ***did*** I ***put*** my glasses?

b. Now, where ***have*** I ***put*** my glasses? (Leech 1987: 43)

This is also typical of Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings, as in (22), where the past and perfect forms can occur within the same context, in the same discourse, by the same speaker, as in (23).

(22) a. God ***left*** me here for some purpose. (SE/002/390)
b. They ***didn't send*** it to me yet. (SE/022/390)
c. They all ***died*** out already. (SE/014/80)

(23) But the wind and the rain ***has wash*** them away. The rain ***wash*** them away. (SE/020/262-4)

In fact, in earlier varieties of English, interchangeability between these two categories was quite common and, in fact, far *more* variable than in the contemporary system. So, while many researchers have used distributional asymmetries with standard English functions to argue for an alternative grammar for surface forms used in PERFECT contexts, diachronic evidence may suggest another explanation. I now turn to the historical record.

3. Historical Development of the Perfect in English

In Old English, there were only two tenses: past and non-past. While the non-past served for durative and non-durative present and future reference, the past covered not only what is represented by the simple past of today, but also durative past tense (e.g. past progressive), as well as the PERFECT and past perfect tenses of the contemporary system (Strang 1970: 311). In other words, there were no overt forms to distinguish between habitual and progressive aspect and between PERFECT and NON-PERFECT meaning (Traugott 1972: 90-1). This can be seen in example (24) below, where habitual activity has no representative auxiliary (24a), and (24b) in which the simple past tense inflection marks a function that today would be overtly marked with the auxiliary and tense inflection combination of the perfect.

(24) a. 7 se cyning 7 ða ricostan men *drincaþ* myran meolc
'and that king and those richest men *drink* mare's milk'.
(Traugott 1972: 89)

b. ðe cyðan hate ðæt me *com* swiðe oft on gemynd hwelce wiotan iu wæron giond Angelcynn
to-you tell command that to-me came very often to mind what wise-men before were throughout England
'Let it be known to you that it has very often come to my mind what wise-men there were formerly throughout England.'
(Traugott 1972: 91)

Clearly, simple past and the perfect tenses were not differentiated. Moreover, it was often the case that the preterite forms marked a function that today would be overtly marked with the auxiliary and tense inflection combination of the perfect (Brunner 1963: 86; Traugott 1972: 90-91). In fact Visser (1970) claims that the simple past and present perfect are interchangeable in most contexts, including those where either one or the other alone would be required in contemporary usage.

During the change from Old to Middle English this two-tense (past vs. non-past) inflectional verb system underwent substantial elaboration (Strang 1970: 98), putting in motion a four-century long changeover from a highly inflectional or (synthetic) tense system to a periphrastic (analytic) one (Traugott 1972: 110).

3.1. Elaboration of the Verb Phrase

One of the most important changes to take place in the English time reference system was the development of separate elements within the verb phrase, in addition to the suffixal inflection on the main verb, to mark tense and/or aspect distinctions in addition to the original, and far more general, PAST tense.

3.1.1. *Have/had*

Perhaps the most prominent expansion of the tense system was the development of the present and past perfect tenses from the stative main verbs *have* and *be* as in (25) below.

(25) I *have* the letter written (i.e. in a written state).

Because the simple past tense gradually shifted in emphasis to explicitly PAST time there was a need for a new verbal structure that could function to represent a close relationship between PAST and PRESENT time. Since a written state implies a previous action, the structure *have written* gradually acquired verbal force, serving as a verbal form pointing to the past and bringing it into relation with the present (Curme 1977: 358).

During the initial phase of this development *have* and *be* competed as auxiliaries for the new category, as in (26); however, *have/had* gradually generalized to more and more verbs and eventually prevailed over *be* (Curme 1977: 359).

(26) a. He took his wyf to kepe whan he ***is gon*** *vs.* and also to ***han gon*** to solitaire exil
b. the yonge sonne ***hath*** in the Ram his halfe cours ***yronne*** *vs.* as rody and bright as dooth the yonge sonne that in the Ram ***is*** foure degrees up ***ronne***
(these examples from Chaucer cited from Brunner 1963: 87)

3.1.2. Three Verb Cluster

During the Middle English period a 'three-verb structure' developed, e.g. *He had done speak* (cf. Visser 1969: 338ff). While the origins of this form are obscure, it clearly represented a completed past time reference action, as in (27a). Inflection on the past participle was apparently variable as the form of the main verb originally surfaced as an infinitive, e.g. *speak*, but was gradually replaced by the past participle, e.g. *I had done spoke*, probably by analogy to forms such as *I done it* (Visser 1970: 2210). Similarly, as Traugott (1972: 146, n.18) points out, the past participle inflection *-ed* on weak verbs is not required. Hence forms such as *has done invent* and *has done invented* were synonymous, as in (27b).

(27) a. Also he seyde ... he ***hadde don sherchyd*** att Clunye.
'Also he said ... he had done searched at Cluny.'
(He had finished searching) (Traugott 1972: 146)

b. And many other false abusion The Paip (=Pope) ***hes done invent.***
(Traugott 1972: 146)

Between Middle and Modern English the form with *done* became stigmatized as nonstandard. It did not survive past the fifteenth century in Southern England (Williams 1975: 273); however, in the Northern dialectal regions it remained common.

3.1.3 Summary

The obvious similarities between the 'creole' forms reported in the literature on AAVE and these Early Modern English analogues has not gone without notice (e.g. Christian et al. 1988; D'Eloia 1973; Herndobler and Sledd 1976; Schneider 1993; Traugott 1972). The same forms as well as standard English *have* + past participle are also attested in written representations of earlier varieties of AAVE (Schneider 1989).

Comparisons based on similarities between surface forms alone however, do not provide unambiguous evidence for semantic function or genetic relationship. It is by now well-known that linguistic items from one language may pattern entirely according to another's rules (e.g. Bickerton 1975; Mufwene 1983a; Rickford 1977; Singler 1990; Tagliamonte et al. in press; Winford 1985). Other forms may represent two systems simultaneously (e.g. while verb stems in creoles have very similar interpretations to the English simple past tense, the same past tense can also be used interchangeably with the present perfect in many PERFECT contexts). Unfortunately, very few conditioning factors, in particular linguistic ones, which might help to illuminate these facts have ever been mentioned, nor, in the rare cases that such factors have been considered, have they ever been identified. Thus, there is no basis from which to differentiate between verbal patterns that are inherent to the English language and those which could possibly be due to hypercorrection, incomplete acquisition or even an alternate system. The case of the PERFECT in English and creole grammars is a particularly difficult site for disentangling these issues because it is a semantic domain in which there is a complete lack of isomorphism

between morphological distinctions (i.e. form) and semantic distinctions (i.e. function).

4. Circumscribing the Variable Context

The conceptual space of PERFECT comprises both a semantic aspect (i.e. current relevance) and a semantic tense (i.e. indefinite past). Thus, the form *have* + past participle is related to more than one semantic function. On the other hand, what is often not recognized in the literature, is that these semantic functions can be represented by more than one *form* as well.

In addition to the parallels between *overt* English and creole PERFECT markers, both grammars can be expected to admit morpho-syntactially unmarked verbs for the same semantic functions. Because English (at least) has widespread phonological deletion in (weak) past time reference, verb stems are possible variants of the simple past. By extension, this means that in PERFECT contexts as well, at least three surface forms might occur: *have* + past participle, preterite and, to some extent, verb stems. In creoles, on the other hand, where the PERFECT is said not to exist, neither as the form *have* + verb, nor as a category in the grammar (Bickerton 1975: 129), we might expect either many verb stems in PERFECT contexts, as found by Winford (1993), and/or creole forms, such as *done* and *been*. Thus, as found in previous studies of the tense/aspect system, (Poplack and Tagliamonte 1989; 1991; 1994; Tagliamonte and Poplack 1993; Tagliamonte et al. in press) the mere existence of a form is not sufficient to identify the underlying grammatical mechanism that produced it.

Take, for example, the *been* + verb construction: If this surface form was produced by an English grammar it would be explained as one in which the auxiliary *have* has been deleted and would be construed as a variant of the PERFECT. While this form does correspond in some instances to the English present perfect as in, e.g. *John been workin' here all day today*, there are often cases where it corresponds to the past or past perfect tense as well, suggesting that it cannot be solely equated with the PERFECT and hence cannot be attributed to an English-like grammar (Bickerton 1975; 1979; Dillard 1972a; Mufwene 1983b; Stewart 1970). Instead, it may represent a creole remote past or anterior

marker. Similar arguments can be made for the *done* + verb construction. It corresponds sometimes to English present perfect and sometimes to past perfect tense depending on the context (Mufwene 1988: 258) and for these reasons it may reflect an underlying creole function, such as completive, unrelated to the standard English system. However, differentiation between patterns that are inherent to the English language and those which derive from an alternate grammatical system can only be observed through analysis of the frequency and distribution of forms across all the contexts in which they might have occurred and in relationship to *all* other forms and functions within the past time reference system more generally.

5. Results

In order to evaluate these possibilities, the analyses reported here approach these data from two different perspectives — surface form and semantic function. First, every verb which referred to (realis) past time was extracted and coded for its morphosyntactic characteristics. Then, using prescriptive English grammar as point of comparison, each surface form was categorized according to the semantic tense/aspect function(s) for which it was used. This allows for a calculation of form/function correspondences in the data. Finally, the co-occurrence patterns of each surface form were examined according to a number of independent linguistic features from the literature on this subject, e.g. time adverbs, conjunctions, and remoteness.

5.1. Distributional Analysis by Semantic Function

Table 1 depicts the overall distribution of surface forms across all past time reference contexts. Observe that both Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings have the same range of variants and, with no substantial exceptions, the same hierarchy.[9] As illustrated earlier, in (1)-(9), both contain surface forms consistent with the literature on the PERFECT in creoles as well as vernacular and historical varieties of English. *Have* + past participle and bare past participles occur in both

[9] The small differences in hierarchy amongst the rarer variants are undoubtedly due to their extremely low frequency overall.

Table 1
Overall distribution of surface forms found in past time reference contexts in ***Samaná English*** and the ***Ex-slave Recordings.***

Surface Form	Samaná English		Ex-Slave Recordings	
	%	N	%	N
Preterite	62	4861	58	1162
Verb stem	17	1311	16	331
Habitual, progressive etc.[10]	15	1152	18	371
was/got passive	2	150	2	47
had + past participle	1.5	120	1	15
have + past participle[11]	1	86	1	18
Past participle	.7	58	1	28
Verbal *-s*	.6	46	1	25
be + verb	.5	39	.04	1
ain't + verb	.5	36	.3	5
done + verb	.1	10	.4	7
had + *done* + verb	.07	6	.2	3
be + *done* + verb	.05	4	—	0
TOTAL N		7879		2013

corpora with the same frequency. *Done* + verb, as well as three verb clusters with auxiliary *be* or *have* also occur. But none of these surface forms exceed 1% of the data, not even the English PERFECT marker *have*. Can the striking infrequency of *have* forms be used as evidence that PERFECT is not a full-fledged category in these data? And is there

10 This category consists of habitual forms such as *used to, would* + verb and variants of the progressive, e.g. *was going*, which are not the focus of this investigation.

11 This includes *have/has/'s* as well as a following verb form which could include unmarked weak verbs and strong verbs with preterit morphology, in addition to standard English past participles.

any evidence that any of these fulfill creole-like, rather than English-like functions?

These questions can only be answered by taking into account the distribution of forms by semantic function. For example, even though a surface form may be infrequent, this may be entirely due to the fact that the ***meaning*** which it embodies was also quite rare. Each past time reference verbal construction was coded according to all tense/aspect categories which could have been used in the same context: (i) the context required the present perfect, as in (28), and (ii) the context permitted either the present perfect or the simple past, as in (29) and (22) above, (iii) the context required the simple past, as in (30), (iv) the context required the past perfect, as in (31), and (v) the context permitted either the past perfect or simple past, as in (32). The remainder under the heading 'Other' consist of contexts permitting habitual and progressive forms which are not the focus of this study (cf. Tagliamonte and Poplack in progress).

(28) PRESENT PERFECT TENSE REQUIRED:
- a. But today we ***calmed*** off and everything ***got*** calm. (SE/002/942)
- b. I came in last Friday and I ***ain't been*** nowhere. (SE/002/1339-40)
- c. Now, those things ***fell*** out. (SE/016/173)

(29) PRESENT PERFECT OR PAST TENSE:
They ***didn't send*** it to me yet. (SE/001/1149)

(30) PAST TENSE REQUIRED:
This morning we ***went*** to the church in Clara. (SE/006/1549)

(31) PAST PERFECT TENSE REQUIRED:
Because they ***hadn't cut*** the road yet. (SE/002/708)

(32) PAST PERFECT OR PAST TENSE:
Well then, they killed the boy. After they ***killed*** the boy.... (SE/002/948)

Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings represent an earlier variety of English spoken in the United States. If that variety developed directly from contact with contemporaneous English vernaculars, then it would not be unreasonable to expect that verbal constructions which have since disappeared from contemporary standard English might appear there. I hypothesize that if a specific set of surface forms was once possible in the semantic context for PERFECT, i.e. *have* or *be* auxiliary, three verb clusters, *done/been* + verb etc., then we should observe some proportion of each of these forms within those contexts. We should also expect restricted usage of some forms in environments which have become specialized to only one tense in contemporary standard English, a context which requires the present perfect for example. If, Samaná English and the Ex-slave Recordings are creole-like, on the other hand, then it would not be unreasonable to expect verb stems, *been* and/or *done* to appear in PERFECT contexts rather than *have*. Moreover, we should also expect the distribution of these forms to follow attested creole patterns, such as remoteness distinctions. Such correspondences will enable us to evaluate whether or not the distribution of morphological marking parallels what would be expected in a English or creole system.

Tables 2 and 3 (see over) depict the percent distribution of each surface form by semantic function. Note the infrequency, but highly partitioned distribution of the rarer PERFECT forms.[12] Bare past participles, preverbal *done*, auxiliary *be* and the three verb clusters are restricted to environments where the English present perfect tense can occur (or in the case of the three verb cluster with *had*, past perfect tense). The specifically creole form *been* + verb does not occur at all!

12 Passives and verbal *-s* clearly pattern with the simple past tense. The latter are undoubtedly Historical Presents in the narrative complicating action section of narratives of personal experience. *Ain't* + verb is vanishingly rare and not specific to any context. See Howe 1994 for the absence of *ain't* in past, as opposed to present time reference contexts contra DeBose 1994.

Table 2
Percent distribution of surface forms by semantic function in *Samaná English*.

SURFACE FORMS	PAST	PAST/ PAST PERFECT	PAST PERFECT	PAST/ PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT	OTHER	TOTAL N
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Preterite	86	3		2		10	4861
			0.2		0.2		
Verb stem	83	2	—	4		10	1311
					0.4		
Habitual and progressive	18		—		—	81	1083
		0.002		0.8			
had + past participle	26	47	18	3	—	7	120
got passive	95	2	—	2	—	—	88
have + past participle	2	1	—	51	44	1	86
was passive	92	3	—	2	—	3	62
Past participle	19	9	—	45	26	2	58
3Vb cluster *had*	—	33	50	17	—	—	6
Verbal *-s*	41	—	—	—	4	54	46
be auxiliary	3	3	—	67	28	—	39
ain't	17	—	—	42	31	11	36
done + verb	20	—	—	60	20	—	10
3Vb cluster with *be*	—	—	—	50	50	—	4
TOTAL N	5728	221	33	277	96	1524	7879

Table 3
Percent distribution of surface forms by semantic function in the ***Ex-Slave Recordings***.

SURFACE FORMS	PAST	PAST/ PAST PERFECT	PAST PERFECT	PAST/ PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT	OTHER	TOTAL N
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Preterite	72	1				26	1162
			0.17	0.86	0.09		
Verb stem	63	2			—	34	331
			0.3	0.9			
Habitual and progressive	14	—	—		—	86	360
				0.28			
had + past participle	—	53	47	—	—	—	15
have + past participle	—	—	—	39	61	—	18
was passive[13]	98	2	—	—	—	—	43
Past participle	25	14	—	11	46	4	28
3Vb cluster *had*	—	75	25	—	—	—	3
Verbal *-s*	76	8	—	—	—	16	25
be auxiliary	—	—	—	100	—	—	1
ain't	40	—	—	40	20	—	5
done + verb	—	14	14	29	43	—	7
3Vb cluster *be*	—	14	14	29	43	—	7
TOTAL N	1176	37	12	29	29	730	2013

13 The *got* passive does not occur in these data.

Consider these patterns in the context of the history of the English language. The present perfect tense developed over a long period of time in which alternation of *have* and *be* as auxiliaries and even multiple auxiliaries such as *have + done* and *be + done* are amply attested. The sporadic, but localized occurrence of *exactly* the same forms here and in the very contexts where they would be expected to occur given this history is striking.

Historical grammars reveal that at least some aspects of the linguistic environment exerted an influence on the occurrence of some of these forms. The auxiliary *be* tended to be used with intransitives (Brunner 1963: 87) and where the participle clearly expressed the idea of a state or had an adjectival interpretation (Curme 1977: 359). Accordingly, we examine the distribution of auxiliary *be* according to the lexical aspect of the verb, illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4
Percent distribution of *be* vs. *have* auxiliary forms by lexical aspect in ***Samaná English***.

SURFACE FORM	STATIVE	PUNCTUAL		TOTAL	
	%	N	%	N	
be + verb	71	27	29	11	38
have + verb	54	46	46	40	86

Observe that verbs with a stative reading have a marked tendency to occur with auxiliary *be*. Moreover, 79% of these contexts were intransitive, as in (33). This patterning is identical to that suggested in the historical record.

(33) a. 'Cause them now, since the war ***is got*** civilized. (SE/002/746-7)
b. I'***m*** never ***been*** in prison half an hour. (SE/021/988)

Consider the bare past participles. The vast majority occur in contexts of present perfect tense, providing initial support for an

underlying auxiliary. However, a non-negligible proportion (about 25%), occur in contexts for the simple past. Is this evidence for loss of the PERFECT via a past verb form generalizing across the verbal delimitation paradigm?

Further examination of these forms by lexical type, depicted in Table 5, reveals that bare past participles are restricted to only four verbs — *done, been, gone* and *seen*.

Table 5
Percent distribution of bare past participles by lexical type across semantic contexts in ***Samaná English***.

SURFACE FORMS	PAST	PAST/ PAST PERFECT	PAST PERFECT	PAST/ PRESENT PERFECT	PRESENT PERFECT	OTHER	TOTAL N
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
been	—	—	—	60	40	—	25
done	43	17	—	35	—	4	24
gone	—	—	—	40	60	—	5
seen	25	25	—	—	50	—	4
TOTAL CONTEXTS	5728	221	33	277	96	1524	58

But it is actually only *done* and *seen* which occur in contexts of simple past, as in (34).

(34) a. They say they ***done*** as I ***done***. (SE/006/256)
b. The daughter came and she ***seen*** about her. (SE/003/443)

Moreover, the form and its function parallel present-day varieties of English (see Section 2.3.4). Thus, systematic encroachment of the bare past participle into the domain of simple past tense (see Section 2.3.3) is not borne out by these data.

In fact, present perfect contexts bear close to the entire inventory of *have* + verb forms in Samaná English, whereas this form is used only 1% of the time anywhere else. A similar pattern is found in the Ex-Slave Recordings. Preterite morphology, on the other hand, occurs very frequently, but only in the semantic contexts which require it in standard English. This leaves the bare stem form. Does its use reflect a creole grammar?

Clearly, its patterning is parallel to the *inflected* preterite form. Taking into consideration the fact that simple past tense is often rendered by the stem form due to phonological reduction processes in vernacular varieties of English (e.g. Guy 1980; Neu 1981) as well as in contemporary AAVE (e.g. Fasold 1972; Labov 1972b; Wolfram 1969), this parallelism of preterite and verb stem is entirely predictable. There is no association of the verb stem with PERFECT contexts as has been found in a creole system (see Section 2.2).

5.2. Summary

There are amazing parallels in the frequency and distribution of surface forms used for past time reference in Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings. Those typical of contemporary English are the predominant forms in every one of the semantic contexts considered and their marking patterns are as would be expected in a English time reference system. While there are a number of *non-standard* forms, all of these have been previously attested both in the history of the English language or in dialects of contemporary English. Moreover, their functions, as can be determined here by the semantic contexts in which they occur, and by the other forms with which they are used, pattern according to what would be expected in an English grammar.

5.3. Distribution Analysis of Co-occurrence Patterns

I now turn to a distributional analysis of the most frequent forms[14] and examine their co-occurrence patterns across a number of independent features of the linguistic environment which are specifically related to

[14] The infrequency of the rarer surface forms do not permit comparable analysis.

PERFECT. I hypothesize that if a specific surface form is associated with a given feature in English (or creoles) and the same is found to be true in Samaná English and/or the Ex-Slave Recordings, then that will provide a point of comparison. If such parallelisms can be found across a number of features, I take this as evidence for similarity of the underlying grammatical mechanism regulating the distribution of forms in the data, and thus their grammars.

5.4. Temporal Distance

In creoles past time reference forms have been linked to relative distance from speech time. In English grammar differential location in time cannot be said to be relevant to any tense, except one — PERFECT — which occurs under conditions of recency and current relevance (Dahl 1984: 118). In order to determine the pertinence of temporal distance to the appearance of surface forms in Samaná and the Ex-Slave Recordings each verb was categorized according to the event time. For example, three distinct time periods are represented by the verbs in example (35): a remote time represented by the verbal structure *did buy*, in (35a), a less remote past time represented by the verbal structure *had went*, in (35b), and a comparatively recent past represented by two unmarked verbs, *come* and *stay*, in (35c-d).

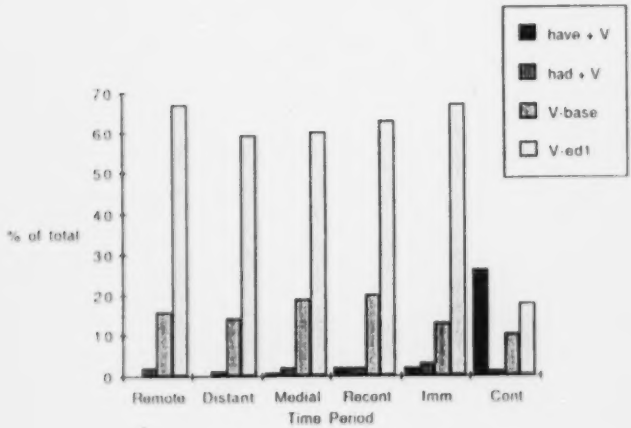
(35) a. But *in that time* we **did buy** sugar four cent the pound, you hear, four cent the pound, *time of Trujillo*.
b. And *from since that* look, the sugar **had went up** even to thirty cents, you hear.
c. And it **come back** *now* to twenty and eighteen.
d. And **stay** so, you hear. (002/890)

If the underlying system of these varieties is creole-like, we would expect to find a correlation between specific time periods and specific surface forms whereas if the system is English-like, the only area in which temporal distance will demonstrate an effect will be in immediate or continuing past contexts.

Figures 1 and 2[15] compare the distribution of surface forms across reference points at different temporal intervals in the past, i.e. remote, distant, medial, recent, immediate and continuing. These are given in terms of their percent occurrence out of the total number of all tense/aspect forms.

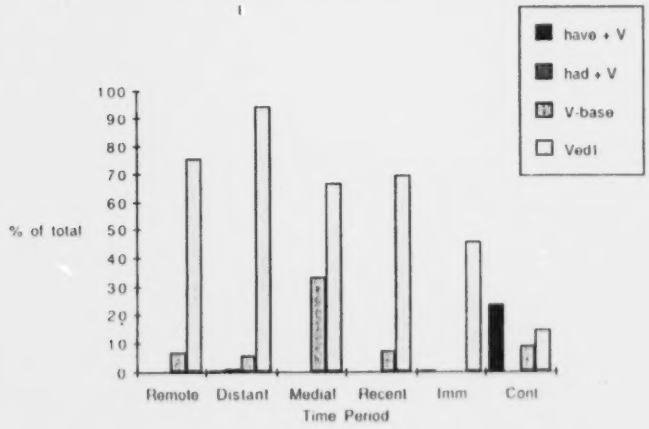
Figure 1

Distribution of preterite, verb stem, *have* + past participle, and *had* + past participle by time period — ***Samaná English***.



15 Abbreviations used in the tables and figures can be interpreted as follows: 'V-ed1' refers to inflected or suppletive preterit forms. 'V-b' refers to a verb stem. 'V-s' refers to unambiguous present morphology, e.g. *don't, -s* . 'Hab' refers to habituals such as *used to* + verb and *would* + verb, among others. 'V-ing, 'Ø-ing' and 'is V-ing' refer to variants of the progressive.

Figure 2
Distribution of preterite, verb stem, *have* + past participle, and *had* + past participle by time period — ***Ex-Slave Recordings***.



Despite a skewed representation of temporal distance in the Ex-Slave Recordings,[16] all surface forms exhibit parallel occurrences across past time reference time periods. These distributional facts suggest that there is no remoteness distinction in the past time reference system of either of these varieties.

One temporal context is an exception, that of 'continuing past'. In both corpora it is composed of the same forms, *have* + past participle, preterite and verb stems, and in the same proportions. *Have* + past participle is almost non-existent in all other past reference times. The same pattern is evident in the Ex-Slave Recordings.

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16 In the Ex-slave Recordings, 94.2% of all verbs considered come from the same time period — that of the 'distant past'. This is the time period of the Ex-Slaves' youth and/or childhood from which most of their reminiscences take place. All other time periods combined make up only 122 tokens.

Recall that the function of the present perfect tense in English is to describe 'an alliance between past and present time' (Jespersen 1964). In these data, a form identical to that used in English for PERFECT distinguishes itself from other potential past time reference forms of sufficient frequency by the restriction of its occurrence to functions which have been identified throughout the prescriptive and historical literature on English as typical of PERFECT. Such correspondence between form and function can hardly be coincidental and I interpret this as another piece of evidence that the English present perfect is a viable tense/aspect category in Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings.

5.5. Temporal Indicators

The interpretation of surface forms in creoles, particularly with regard to time reference, is said to be dependent on context. In English, on the other hand the difference between tense categories, especially between PERFECT and simple past tense, is marked by co-occurrence restrictions with specific adverbs (e.g. *lately, so far, already, yet, up to now*, etc.) and conjunctions (e.g. *before, after, since*, etc.) (cf. Huddleston 1984: 158-9; Jespersen 1964: 243; Leech 1971; Quirk and Greenbaum 1972: 44; Quirk et al. 1985).

5.5.1. Adverbs

In English grammar features which predict where the present perfect is preferred to the simple past are related to temporal specification (Visser 1970: 2192). In creole grammars on the other hand temporal adverbs provide contextual cues which help to disambiguate morpho-syntactically unmarked verb in addition to the information provided by the stative/non-stative distinction (Mufwene 1983a).

Accordingly, temporal indicators in the immediate (sentential) environment of each past-reference form were tabulated in order to determine what effect temporal adverbs have on surface morphological forms in the two corpora. Figure 3 shows the frequency of adverbial specification across surface forms.

Figure 3
Percent frequency of adverbs by surface forms in ***Samaná English*** and the ***Ex-Slave Recordings***.

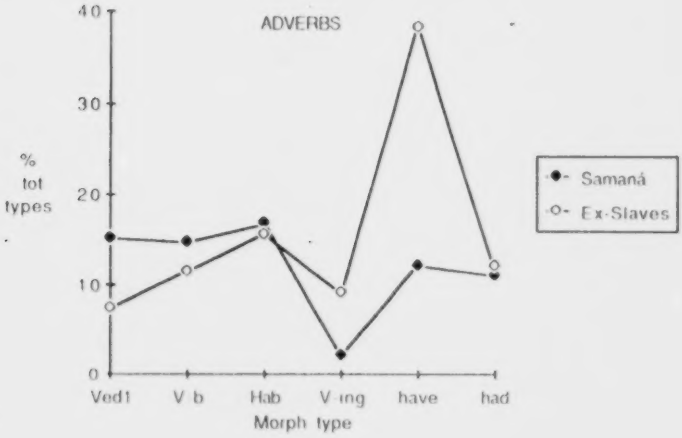

Figure 3 shows that the presence of a temporal adverb in the local clause structure has little effect on surface morphology in Samaná English. Marked and bare verbs behave almost identically. The high frequency of adverbs with *have* + verb in the Ex-Slave Recordings is due to the small number of contexts (N=18) in this category.

What happens when the adverbs are subdivided according to type? Prescriptive English grammar holds that some adverbs are linked to specific tense/aspect categories. For example, there is a restriction against the PERFECT with time-position adverbials referring to specific times, as in (36a). These adverbs, e.g. *yesterday, at that time, in 1901*, etc. force the occurrence of the simple past tense, as in (36b). Though not restricted to explicitly past time, time-frequency adverbials are said to occur with simple past tense forms which have a habitual semantic interpretation. Present relevance adverbs, on the other hand, i.e. those that refer to a period of time that stretches from a point in the past to

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speech time, (36b), are reserved for use with the present perfect (Visser 1970).

(36) a. *I ***have seen*** him last night.
b. I ***have live*** here twenty-one years. ... I came in the '61. (SE/019/82)

(37) *I BIN know you **for a long time.**

Tables 8 and 9 illustrate the distribution of surface forms by adverb type.

Table 8
Distribution of adverb types across surface forms in *Samaná English*.

	Preterite % (N)	Verb stem % (N)	Other % (N)	*have* % (N)	*had* % (N)	Total N
Time/ frequency	17 (17)	15 (15)	63 (62)	3 (3)	2 (2)	99
Time/ position	58 (143)	21 (53)	16 (40)	2 (5)	2 (6)	247
'then' (subsequence)	61 (212)	30 (105)	7 (26)	— (Ø)	1 (4)	347
Present reference	41 (18)	23 (10)	2 (1)	25 (11)	9 (4)	44
Continuous	27 (11)	41 (17)	41 (17)	15 (6)	— (Ø)	41
TOTAL						778

Table 9
Distribution of adverb types across surface forms in the *Ex-Slave Recordings*.

	Preterite % (N)	Verb stem % (N)	Other % (N)	*have* % (N)	*had* %	Total N
Time/ frequency	33 (16)	18 (9)	41 (20)	8 (4)	— (Ø)	49
Time/ position	69 (44)	13 (8)	11 (7)	11 (7)	2 (1)	64
'then' (subsequence)	32 (14)	39 (17)	30 (13)	— (Ø)	— (Ø)	44
Present reference	50 (1)	— (Ø)	— (Ø)	50 (1)	— (Ø)	2
Continuous	14 (45)	16 (5)	3 (1)	29 (9)	6 (2)	31
TOTAL						190

'Present reference' adverbs, illustrated in (38a-b), are distributed across all the surface forms but they are the *only* type of adverb that occurs with any degree of frequency in contexts marked by *have* in Samaná English. Of all adverbs that occur with *have* + verb (N=25), 44% are of this type.

(38) a. They knocked that out. Everything **now** *have* change. (SE/003/827-8)

b. I'm sorry some of them *haven't reach* **yet** that you'd see them. SE/(009/346)

Unfortunately the Ex-Slave Recordings contain only two of these so a similar comparison is impossible. The high percentage of other adverb types co-occurring with this morphological form in the Ex-Slave Recordings is due to a large number of continuous adverbials, as in (39a-c), which are also consistent with the English present perfect.

(39) a. I ***ain't had*** no clothes to buy since I been on the project and I***'ve been*** on it, I think, 'bout nine - 'bout **eight or nine years** I believe. (ESR/00Z/98)
b. Then he died. He been dead **forty some odd year.** (00Z/75)
c. We ***been*** slaves **all our lives.** (008/188)

On the other hand *been* never occurs with time position adverbs. Recall that in AAVE there is a restriction against the use of stressed *BIN* with exactly these adverbs. This means that the 'absolute restriction' against continuous adverbs in AAVE in contexts such as *for a long time*, as in *I BIN know you for a long time* (Rickford 1977) does not hold in these data. This can be clearly seen in (39b-c) above from the Ex-Slave Recordings and in (40a-b) below from Samaná English. In contrast, forms with *have* rarely occur with adverbs referring to specific time, e.g. *last night*.

(40) a. ... *been raining* a good bit **all these days pass.** (021/581)
b. I can't hardly tell you 'cause it *been* **so long.** (020/18)

Finally, time-position adverbs in Samaná English are restricted to preterite or verb stem forms — 58% with preterite and 21% with verb stems. The same is true of the Ex-Slave recordings where 69% of all these adverbs occur with the preterite and 13% occur with verb stems.

5.5.2. Conjunctions

Conjunctions with disambiguating temporal value (Chung and Timberlake 1985: 209) also have specific collocation restrictions in English. For example, *since* actually requires the use of the present perfect, e.g. *He has been finished since last March*. Others, such as *when*, imply coincidence. While forms such as *after* can be used with either simple past tense or past perfect (Quirk et al. 1972: 339).

Accordingly, each context in these data was tabulated for its occurrence with temporal conjunctions, as illustrated in (41).

(41) a. I've seed covers **since** ***I've been*** big enough. (ESR/00W/334)
b. Oh he was so mean, fractious that-a-way, **when** he got ***drinking***. (ESR/00W/470)
c. Well then **after** they ***had*** that war, well then all had to go home. (SEC/004/401)

Figures 4, 5 and 6 represent how the three main conjunction types, *since*, *when* and *after*, are distributed across surface forms in Samaná English, the only data set where there are a sufficient number of temporal conjunctions to view patterns of co-occurrence. In Figure 4 *since* occurs with *have* + past participle and *had* + past participle, although more frequently with *have* + past participle, the form which most closely approximates the English present perfect. In Figure 5, *when* exhibits a propensity to appear with present V-ing forms. *After*, illustrated in Figure 6, is said to occur either with the simple past or the past perfect. Predictably it is found with preterites, verb stems and *had* + past participle as well as with habituals (e.g. *used to*, *would* etc.).

Figure 4
Percent occurrence of *since* with each surface form in ***Samaná English***.

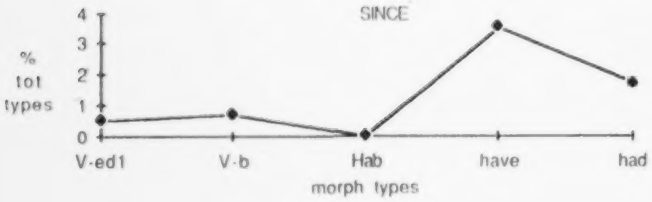


Figure 5
Percent occurrence of *when* with each surface forms in ***Samaná English***.

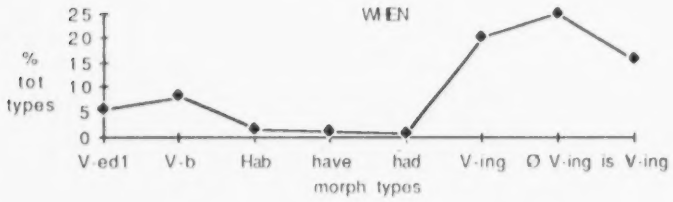
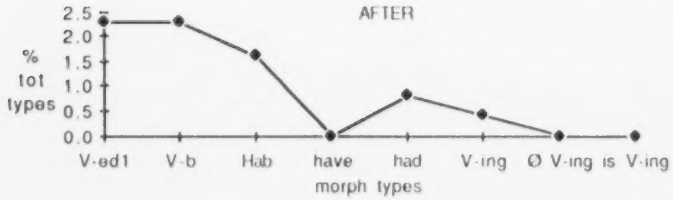


Figure 6
Percent occurrence of *after* with each surface form in ***Samaná English***.



5.6. Summary

Distributional analyses of co-occurrence patterns have revealed that the surface forms of past time reference are not differentiated by the relative 'remoteness' of past time except for that of 'continuing' past time. Here the context is restricted to *have* + past participle, preterite and verb

stem. This behaviour parallels the English present perfect. Surface forms exhibit co-occurrence patterns similar to those of English. Time position adverbs co-occur with preterites and verb stems; time frequency adverbs co-occur with habitual and progressive forms. There are no functionally-motivated marked patterns as suggested for creoles in which morphosyntactially unmarked verbs would occur in contexts of temporal disambiguation. Present relevance adverbs are the only adverb type typical of the surface form *have* which is, once again, consistent with a PERFECT interpretation for the semantic function of this form.

The distribution of forms with conjunctions is also consistent with those suggested in English grammars, in which the surface form *have* + past participle patterns with *since*. Note also that the percent occurrence of preterite and verb stem is the same across all of the conjunctions considered here corroborating my earlier observations that these forms are variants of the same tense.

Although co-occurrence patterns such as these cannot be entirely conclusive in determining tense/aspect categories (cf. Comrie 1985), taken in conjunction with the partitioning of forms across semantic contexts, they provide corroborating evidence for interpreting these patterns as English-like, not creole-like, while at the same time confirming the parallelism between the two data sets more generally.

6. Discussion

This article has examined the PERFECT in Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings through separate analyses of the distribution of forms by semantic function and co-occurrence patterns. Despite the overall rarity of this category in the general realm of past time, the most frequent forms used to mark it — *have* + past participle and bare past participles — are not at all marginal in contexts *licensed* for the present perfect in English. Co-occurrence patterns with temporal distance, adverbs and conjunctions also mirror those of the present perfect in standard English, while differing from those proposed for creoles. These findings suggest that the form *have* actually functions as a productive marker of PERFECT in these data. Bare past participles, with the exception of *seen* and *done*, are probably the result of *have* deletion since their occurrence is highly restricted to the same PERFECT

contexts. Other surface forms attested in the literature were also found to mark PERFECT. Why should this be so?

I briefly outlined the development of the perfect in the history of English and found that it is perhaps the only tense/aspect category in English with such variability in forms. At its inception, auxiliary *had* and *be* were productive variants. In Middle English further elaboration of the verb phrase within the same domain of meaning led to the development of three-verb structures, *have/had done* + verb and *'m/is/are done* + verb. All these are attested in vernacular (white) English in the southern United States. As far as the bare past participle is concerned, forms such as *I seen/I done* have been traced to at least as early as the high tide of Irish immigration in the 1840's, the same time period represented by Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings. In England they remain common in the West Midlands and the north and they also resemble Scottish forms. Thus, all the forms discussed here are found to persist in many contemporary varieties of English around the world where they are characterized as dialectal, non-standard, subject to style-shifting and the effects of education (e.g. Francis 1958). It is not surprising, given the extra-linguistic characteristics of the speakers in these corpora and the status of these varieties as linguistic enclaves, that members of an earlier English verb system persist, albeit marginally.

Is there any support here for the loss of the perfect? If *have* deletion is the first stage of this process, there is little evidence of a general process of change. While earlier studies have not provided actual figures for the frequency and distribution of *have* across lexical verbs, without evidence to the contrary we might assume that all verbs have an equal propensity to be used for PERFECT reference. But contexts in which *have* deletion occurs are restricted to infrequent realizations of *been, done* and *seen*. Infrequent preterite and verb stem forms in contexts of PERFECT cannot be taken to reflect either creole origins or ongoing change, since this usage is consistent with the historical record which documents extensive variation between preterite and present perfect tenses in earlier stages of English (see Section 3).

What of the forms that could not be subsumed under a *have*-deletion hypothesis? First, the creole-like structure *been* + verb did not even occur. Thus, of all surface forms found in these data, only those in

(3), namely *done* + verb, could not be interpreted as the deletion of a (standard) English past participle. Although these contexts are not structurally parallel to the contemporary standard English perfect, if we take the *three* verb cluster into account then these forms may simply be deletion of the same perfect auxiliary, but from a three place verb phrase, rather than the contemporary auxiliary + main verb structure. Thus, the *have* deletion hypothesis can be maintained.

The similarities between Samaná English, the Ex-Slave Recordings and other varieties of English and their lack of similarity with creoles can hardly be coincidental. Although English in the United States and the Caribbean could arguably have been influenced by creoles (but cf. Mufwene to appear-a; to appear-b for an alternative analysis) varieties such as those found in Newfoundland and Tristan da Cunha were not. Thus, the origins of these perfect forms and their functions must necessarily be traced to the original source in Britain. The rare PERFECT variants are remnants from an earlier stage in the development of the present and past perfect tenses in the history of the English language. Little, if anything, is known about the linguistic and extra-linguistic *conditioning* of variability in this area of the grammar. While the findings reported here now provide the basis for such analyses (Tagliamonte and Poplack 1995), it seems clear that the grammar of early Black English, insofar as it is instantiated by Samaná English and the Ex-Slave Recordings, was PERFECT just the way it was.

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